# The Man who was Never SHAKESPEARE

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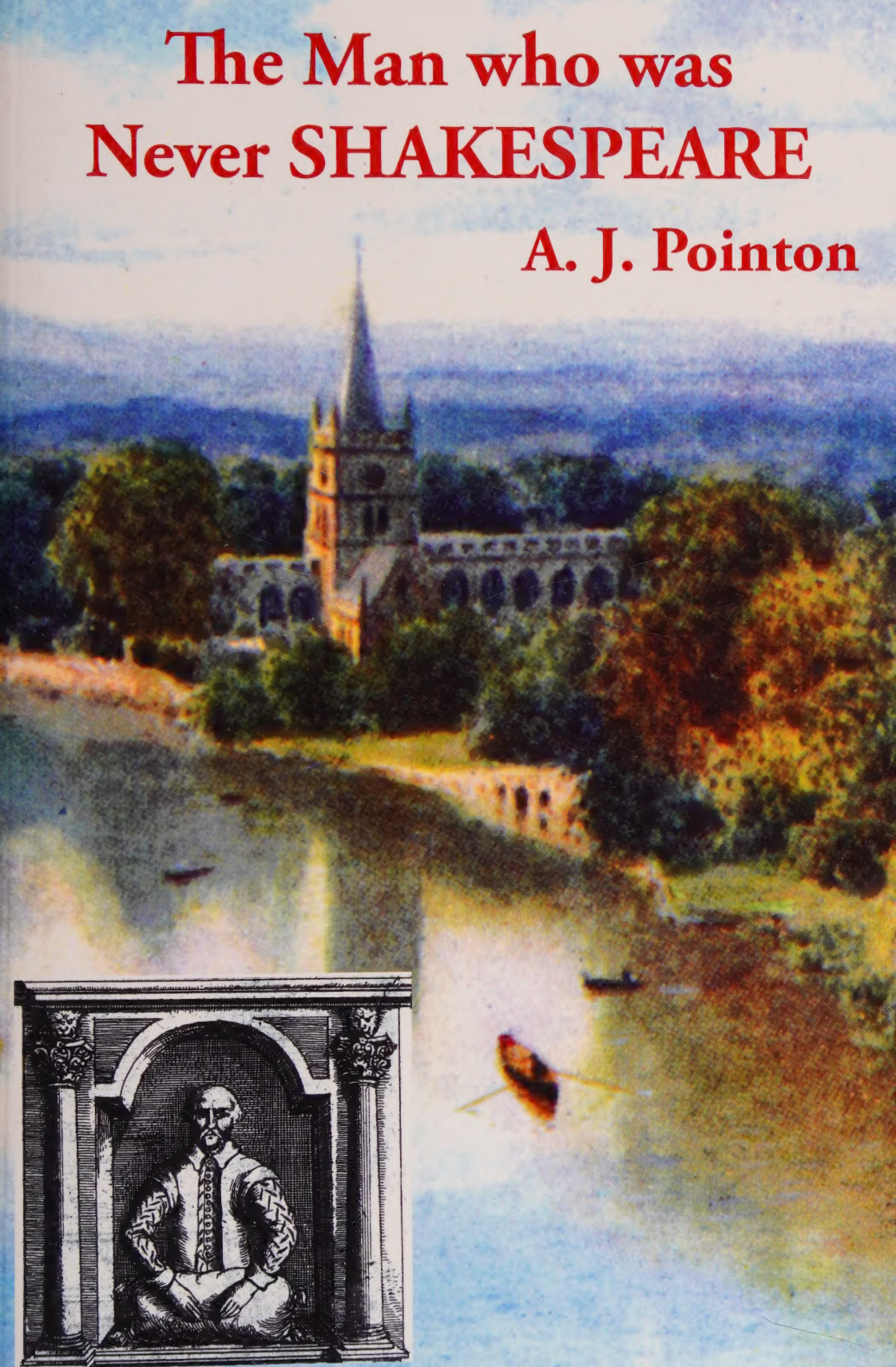

## Summary

To complete this section, and as a quick reference for the reader, we briefly give some of the strong reasons for being certain William Shakspere was not Shakespeare.

1. Most serious scholars even among the orthodox acknowledge that it is impossible to reconcile what is actually known about William Shakspere of Stratford with what the works of Shakespeare reveal about their author. The intensive search for something that would identify William Shakspere as someone who could write, let alone be a writer, has been a total failure. That, by itself, should remove him as a "candidate" for being Shakespeare.

2. From his cradle to his grave, William Shakspere never used the name Shakespeare for himself (or for his children); and he never called himself a poet or playwright, even when that would have helped secure the family coat of arms to give his father the title "Gentleman" before he died. It is impossible to believe Shakspere could have written under the name Shakespeare, so close to his own, and then failed to use it even when it would have been to his and his family's advantage. This consistent use by Shakspere matches that of the writer "Shakespeare" who regularly used that name and never Shakspere.

3. Not one of William Shakspere's friends, colleagues, acquaintances, relatives, fellow actors, fellow theatre sharers, managers, supposed fellow playwrights, fellow pupils or schoolmasters (if he had any) has been identified as the source of any reference to him or any anecdote about him as Shakespeare, or as a poet or playwright. Even when it would have advantaged Cuthbert Burbage financially in two legal disputes to use that name and those terms for him, he only referred to him as the player or man Shakspere. (The use of the names of Heminges and Condell, and the hints that Shakspere of Stratford was Shakespeare in the First Folio were clearly part of the deception.) There is no evidence anyone from Stratford who knew Shakspere in London reported home on his fame. During his lifetime no one in Stratford noted him as being famous and no one is known to have reported his death to anyone in London, and no one owned a copy of any of his works. And, when he was on his way to being famous after 1623, no visitor to Stratford got useful information on Shakspere as a writer from surviving friends and family.

4. The mysterious nature and distribution of the dates of the publication of Shakespeare's plays cannot be reconciled with him being the theatre-sharer, player-sharer and businessman Shakspere. There is a similar problem with the identification of dates before 1589 for some of the plays, and the fact that Shakespeare wrote the first ever tetralogy

before 1592, when it seems impossible to get Shakspere into London much before 1589, even if he could write.

5. William Camden, Jonson's tutor and a member of the College of Arms, knew of both Shakspere and Shakespeare. He wrote of the worthies of Stratford, but never mentioned Shakespeare when he wrote of Stratford, or Stratford when he wrote of Shakespeare, and did not take any note of Shakspere's death.

6. The deceptions in the First Folio would not have been needed if Shakspere had really been Shakespeare, and are as good as a signal that he was not. Shakspere's coat of arms would have graced that book if it had been his, and the conventional pen and paper would have graced the original Stratford bust. Yet the original bust in Stratford Church, which did have the Shakspere coat of arms, showed a trader, not a writer or learned man, while the inscription below it was clearly made to be ambiguous.

7. Nobody doubts William Shakspere would have been steeped in the accent and dialect of Warwickshire, and the absence of those from the works of Shakespeare (who did use dialects and accents from elsewhere) shows he was not Shakespeare. And their absence is consistent with the lack of other Stratford-related features in the works.

8. It is impossible to reconcile the litigious William Shakspere, working for a profit-making acting company, with the writer Shakespeare who was known among writers and publishers as the man least likely to protest if his works were published piratically or his name was put on other people's works.

9. There is no evidence of literacy for William Shakspere or any of his ancestors, siblings or children. There is no evidence that he, or any of his brothers, qualified to go to school or could have qualified: quite the opposite. The conclusion from the way William Shakspere's name was written for him so differently in form and spelling on legal documents in the places where a literate man would have written his regular signature is that he could not write. The only evidence available on Shakspere's intellectual abilities indicates he did not have a good memory, and not just when he was approaching his death.

10. It is near impossible to believe the actor-manager Shakspere would have written plays too long to be performed without cutting, or plays and sonnets derogatory about actors.

11. There are major areas of specialist knowledge demonstrated in the plays which even individually must make it impossible to accept Shakspere as the writer Shakespeare. In particular these relate to the following matters:

(a) William Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood;
(b) Cambridge University jargon and events;
(c) the Inns of Court;
(d) the law, its language and abstruse cases;
(e) the inquest into Marlowe's death;
(f) Italy;
(g) the Court at Nérac;
(h) Latin, French, Italian, Spanish and Greek;
(g) English vocabulary, usage and rhetoric;
(h) falconry;
(i) bias-bowls;
(j) music.

To this list may be added many other items, many identified by Spurgeon, the cumulative effect of which also is to eliminate Shakspere as a Shakespeare candidate.

12. Nobody doubts the writer Shakespeare knew the third Earl of Southampton, but decades of research have found nothing to link William Shakspere to the Earl or to anyone or anything connected to him. There is also no evidence of links between Shakspere and the others it is claimed he must have met if he had been Shakespeare.

13. No known professional playwright of the time had anything like the range of business activities of Shakspere, or the geographical range of his commuting between London and Stratford and touring as an actor-manager during the time he was supposed to be writing. None had the high level of earnings from other activities that he did which would have made a writing career into a difficult secondary occupation if he were Shakespeare, especially with the apparent absence of any income from it.

14. Though Dr John Hall wrote summaries of the lives of his patients, he wrote nothing about his father-in-law. Dr James Cooke who visited Susanna Hall, Shakspere's daughter, to see Dr Hall's books, wrote about her husband but not her supposedly famous father. Hall himself showed no interest in Shakespeare's manuscripts or books, nor did any family member, and Shakspere was not mentioned as a writer on any family gravestone. Moreover, while Shakespeare must have possessed and regularly used hundreds of books, the evidence is that Shakspere owned none in Stratford or London.

15. The failure to find evidence for a real writer named Shakespeare is consistent with different people, including the writer himself, identifying the name as a pseudonym and with the fact that no one was called to task or punished for the insults to the great and good or other political matters in Shakespeare's plays, and with the failure of the Queen's agents to identify the author of *Richard II*.

16. Shakespeare's name was so famous that it (or just his initials) were those most often stolen to increase the sales of others' works, yet not one elegy or eulogy was written for him when Shakspere died in 1616, nor was Shakspere buried in Westminster Abbey. Shakespeare wrote no dedications, eulogies or elegies for anyone and, in turn, nobody of note, except Jonson for pay in 1623, wrote poems for the publication of his famous works.

17. Here we mention a paradoxical point. If *The Tempest* did use the "Strachey letter" as is claimed, and if *The Two Noble Kinsmen* was a working collaboration of Fletcher and Shakespeare, those "facts" – generally insisted on by orthodox scholars – would rule out Shakspere as a candidate; but, as shown in Appendix F, the claims do not stand up.

The main task of this book is now complete. The "evidence" and inventions relating to the myth that William Shakspere of Stratford was the writer Shakespeare, and the efforts made to show he could have been that writer, have been sifted, and it has been shown they are dust: hard evidence shows he was not Shakespeare. As a result, his real identity can be restored to him; and, with what is really known about him, and about the world in which he grew up, lived and worked, an attempt has been made to give a fair picture of the sort of life he would have had. Yet it would leave a gap in Shakspere's story if we did not ask who might have been hidden behind his identity for nearly 400 years. That will occupy our next chapter, while the final one will look at why ending the Shakspere myth and restoring his true identity is so important.

## Note

For readers who would look further at how orthodox writers deal with the problems for the Shakspere myth identified in this book, it seems impossible to find good references. Those that deal with the problems of the Shakespeare myth concentrate on picking holes in the cases for other Shakespeare candidates (which are minor compared with the chasms in the case for Shakspere) in the apparent hope that such distractions improve the case for Shakspere being Shakespeare.